

"Revolution of Thought and Action": W. E. B. Du Bois's World Search for Abolition Democracy

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ABSTRACT In recent years, scholars and activists have brought renewed attention to W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of abolition democracy. Initially coined in *Black Reconstruction* (1935), to describe both a political movement and a democratic ideal, abolition democracy has been taken up theoretically by Angela Davis, Allegra McLeod, and others to describe the ongoing process of dismantling global capitalism's political, racial, gender, and economic hierarchies, alongside the simultaneous creation of reconstructed social relations, institutions, and practices governed by universal democratic participation, instead of by force. This article suggests that Du Bois continues to draw on abolition democracy as a conceptual framework in his post-*Black Reconstruction* work. Tracing the outlines of this framework in his unpublished manuscript *A World Search for Democracy*, I demonstrate how for Du Bois, the question of democracy remains fundamentally tied to the ongoing legacies of slavery. As he continues to draw on the Reconstruction era as an historical example, Du Bois gives further shape to the idea of abolition as a process in the *present* (rather than an event in the past). In doing so, he recuperates the unfulfilled promise of abolition democracy as a theoretical and practical model for considering alternatives modes of citizenship beyond the material, ideal, and embodied limits of liberal bourgeois democracy. Accordingly, I argue, in *World Search*, we can see the outlines of abolition democracy as a three-fold project: political-economic, epistemic, and affective. Each section of this article sheds light on one of these dimensions, drawing on theoretical models from Nancy Fraser, Sylvia Wynter, Sara Ahmed, and Dylan Rodríguez. By thus abstracting the concept of abolition democracy further from the historical movement analyzed in *Black Reconstruction*, I propose that Du Bois's *World Search* offers lessons that can inform abolitionist theory and praxis today.

KEYWORDS Black studies, radical politics, fascism, history, democracy, abolition

In a letter to the publisher Alfred Harcourt, dated February 11, 1937, W. E. B. Du Bois outlines his plans for a book he is close to finishing at the time. On the heels of his

monumental historical study, *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois's ambitions are yet again grand: "I want to see how far I can induce Democracy, Fascism, and Communism to speak the same language and to draw into the picture the colored peoples of the world."¹ The book project that would come to be titled *A World Search for Democracy* never fully materialized. To this day it remains unpublished and exists only as a partial manuscript in the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Part-epistolary novel, part-philosophical treatise, its largest coherent segment contains 104 hand-numbered pages counting up to 128, and includes a table of contents indicating at least three chapters missing from the original manuscript, parts of which are included in the archive in fragmentary form.² As the first book project Du Bois took up after the publication of *Black Reconstruction*, it deserves further scrutiny, especially for scholars interested in Du Bois's thoughts on democracy, fascism, and Communism during the 1930s.

A World Search for Democracy takes the form of a letter exchange between its two main characters, Abraham Lincoln Jones and Jane Kent. Rather than seeing either one or both of these characters as immediate mouth-pieces for Du Bois's political theory, I suggest that the form of the epistolary novel offers the affordance of a sort of testing ground for new ideas. As McLeod notes, "Writing a novel through the voices of two fictional characters gives Du Bois the chance to play a bit with ideas that would have been tricky to present in his usual writing forms."³ Both characters exhibit a degree of overlap with the biographies of Du Bois and his future wife, Shirley Graham, who at the time was just appointed head of the fine arts department at an arts and industrial (A&I) state college in Nashville, Tennessee. Jones and Jane (as they are referred to in the manuscript for short), are both lecturers at the fictional Hartwell A&I College, described as "a conservative orthodox institution for Negro youth," located close to the South Carolina border in rural Georgia.⁴ The plot is put in motion in the first chapter, when Jones is asked to take an unpaid leave of absence by the college president over remarks Jones made in a lecture. When a student asks him whether democracy currently exists anywhere in the world, he responds, hesitatingly, "I do not know. I used to know. I was quite certain. But today I am puzzled. . . . I know it exists, but where and in just what form—that I do not know, and I want to find out. Something has happened to the world and to me, and I feel like undertaking a new search—a sort of voyage of discovery."⁵

This voyage of discovery charts the course for the novel: *World Search* traces Jones and Jane's correspondence as he travels to different places around the world, including England, France, Germany, Russia, China, and Japan, assessing the state of democracy in each country as he comes to experience it.⁶ Jane responds with her own observations on government practices in the United States, including committees, schools, local government, and national government. In between what mostly reads like a missive of democratic theory, a half-convincing love story unfolds, in which the two characters

develop a longing for each other over the physical distance between them. At the end of the novel, Jones and Jane reunite in Honolulu, Hawaii, and plot out their future life together as a married couple struggling to make ends meet.

The journey undertaken by the fictional character Jones mirrors in part the real-life journey undertaken by his author, W. E. B. Du Bois, in 1936.⁷ As early as 1931, Du Bois had applied to the Oberlaender Trust of the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation to conduct research in Germany – where, as is widely known, he had spent three semesters as a graduate student at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin from 1892 to 1894, before acquiring his Ph.D. from Harvard University. While Du Bois's renewed sojourn to Germany was initially planned as a study "of the attitude of the German people since the World War toward the problem of world peace," the political situation in Germany was far from peaceful by the time Du Bois would actually set out on his journey on June 5, 1936.⁸ Berlin, where Du Bois spent a significant part of his trip, was already in the thralls of one of the most ostentatious displays ever of Nazi propaganda, the 1936 Summer Olympics, which took place from August 1–16.⁹

Although I will return to Du Bois's writing on Nazi Germany at the end of this article, my main concern (to begin with) is of a different nature. I am interested in Du Bois's "curiosity for the plight of democracy" not simply in Germany but "in the world," as he phrases it in the explanatory note that prefaces the *World Search* manuscript¹⁰—especially against the backdrop of the historical research on the U.S. Civil War and the Reconstruction era, which he completed just prior to his 1936 world travels.

Abolition Democracy as Concept

I propose that *World Search* stands out as a particularly comprehensive example among those texts written by Du Bois in his "*Black Reconstruction* era,"¹¹ in which he formulates his thoughts on how to approach the project of reconstructing democracy in a moment of capitalist and democratic crisis. Put differently, I suggest that the concept of abolition democracy—which Du Bois sketches theoretically alongside his historical study of the *political movement* of abolition democracy in *Black Reconstruction*—can be seen to take further shape in Du Bois's late 1930s work.¹² In writing *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois found that the promise of true democracy appeared only briefly in the history of the United States. In the period after the Civil War, newly freed enslaved people claimed and enforced their right to vote, built democratic institutions such as public schools from the ground up, and worked towards establishing equitable approaches to industry. However, counter-revolutionary forces, driven ideologically by white supremacy and economically by a demand for profit, soon intervened in what Du Bois described as "a determined effort to

reduce black labor as nearly as possible to a condition of unlimited exploitation and build a new class of capitalists on this foundation."¹³ What Du Bois grapples with retrospectively in his text is thus the lost promise of abolition democracy during the re-entrenched reign of racial capitalism.¹⁴ Through his historical engagement with the international aftermath of the U.S. Civil War—i.e. the expansion of Euro-American empire and colonialism throughout the world—he comes to understand racial capitalism as the antithesis of a democratic ideal, which he views as attainable only under a fundamental restructuring of economic and social relations. If, as C. L. R. James once suggested, the crucial contribution of *Black Reconstruction* was to show how Black people in particular "had tried to carry out ideas that went beyond the prevailing conceptions of bourgeois democracy," Du Bois considered similarly expansive ideas to also be crucial for the 1930s conjuncture.¹⁵

Even though Du Bois does not use the term in *World Search*, I propose that abolition democracy provides a useful analytical framework to trace his political thought in the manuscript—especially from a vantage point today in which activists and scholars have given the framework renewed critical currency and expanded its meaning—starting with Angela Davis's influential publication *Abolition Democracy* (2005).¹⁶ As a tradition of critique and praxis, abolitionist approaches to democracy aim for a radical reconstruction of political, economic, and social relations historically steeped in the legacies of slavery and colonialism. Through a core strategy which most activists and scholars trace back to *Black Reconstruction*, abolition democracy insists on the simultaneous dismantling of oppressive and exploitative structures, while working to build alternative structures for the common good, as determined through equal participation by the collective. In contrast to liberal democracy's reliance on organized state violence and carceral institutions, abolition democracy's collectivist program is not predicated on the repression and unfreedom of some. Grounded in a prefigurative politics of praxis, abolition democracy rejects gradualism and reformism as much as it rejects eschatological utopianism, insisting on the transformative potential of the here and now.

In this article, I trace the concept of abolition democracy as Du Bois continues to draw on it in his unpublished manuscript, *A World Search for Democracy*. I demonstrate how in this post-*Black Reconstruction* work, the question of democracy remains, for Du Bois, fundamentally tied to the ongoing legacies of slavery and the contemporary realities of colonialism. As he continues to draw on the Reconstruction era as an historical example, Du Bois gives further shape to the idea of abolition as a process in the *present* (rather than an *event in the past*). I propose that in doing so, he recuperates the unfulfilled promise of abolition democracy as a theoretical and practical model for considering alternative modes of citizenship beyond the material, ideal, and embodied limits of liberal bourgeois democracy. Accordingly, I argue, in *World Search*, we can see the outlines of abolition democracy as a three-fold project: political-economic, epistemic, and affective.¹⁷ Each of

the following sections will shed light on one of these dimensions, drawing on theoretical models from Nancy Fraser, Sylvia Wynter, Sara Ahmed, and Dylan Rodríguez. By thus abstracting the concept of abolition democracy further from the historical movement as analyzed in *Black Reconstruction*, I propose that Du Bois's *World Search* offers lessons that can inform abolitionist theory and praxis today.

World Search's Theory of the Commodification of Labor: Abolition Democracy as Political-Economic Project

If *Black Reconstruction* was Du Bois's attempt to read the history of the U.S. Civil War and its aftermath through a Marxist lens of historical analysis, *World Search* reads, in some parts, like his attempt to focus this lens on an analysis of contemporary political economies across various countries.¹⁸ Jane expresses a popular Marxian maxim regarding base and superstructure that seems to permeate the novel's analytic in her first letter to Jones: "if you want to know a country, know the distribution of its income."¹⁹ This world search for democracy, the reader learns, unfolds therefore from a decidedly materialist perspective: to get to the bottom of democracy's ills, one must examine the relations of production.

Soon enough, Jones finds the question of political power to be fundamentally linked to the question of economic power. On his first stop in England, he encounters what he perceives to be an oligarchy in which a wealthy cadre of capitalists, colonialists, and aristocrats sets severe limits to the scope of the majority's democratic influence. "[I]n the ownership of accumulated wealth and division of income, there is little democratic control," Jones writes to Jane.²⁰ English democracy, he concludes, is thus only a democracy in name, restricting the means of participation largely to those who are propertied and white.

If political power is largely determined by economic power, this dynamic has a racialized history, as Jones illustrates in the novel's fourth chapter, "Jones on Democracy." He outlines how the economic power that fueled the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century and thus cemented itself politically was amassed by means of enslavement and colonialism: "The spread toward democratic equality forthwith meets opposition from the possessors of this economic power. This economic power was increased by geometric ratio in the 18th and 19th centuries because of the African slave trade, African slavery, and the black labor which was the foundation of the cotton kingdom."²¹ Having amassed political power by economic means, the supposedly democratizing impulse of the bourgeois classes turned into an impulse of preserving power against those who remain excluded. Liberal democracy thus became a "stronghold against intrusion from without," a bulwark for the preservation of power instead of a mechanism for its even distribution.²²

Thus, Jones outlines a theory in which political power is, in effect, a function of economic power under the rule of racial capitalism.

What is to be done, then, about this fundamentally flawed distribution of power the world over? Interestingly, Jones points to a historical example where such an attempt was made successfully, even if tragically briefly:²³

Only for a moment, in the United States of America in 1867, when four million black slaves had enfranchisement and the possibility of economic power added to their legal freedom, did the world trend set toward universal human development. Capitalism girded its loins. It swiftly nullified the Negro vote. It quickly warned Europe with terrible fiction concerning American Reconstruction. And in the meantime in both America and Europe capital set its house in order for a new conquest of the world.²⁴

Here, Jones sums up the story of abolition democracy as Du Bois tells it in *Black Reconstruction*. The struggle for economic and political justice fought by formerly enslaved Black people in the South was violently defeated as part of a wave of white supremacist backlash that also precipitated the spread of Euro-American imperialism.²⁵ These forces, Jones argues in a polemical vocabulary, aligned themselves "in opposition not simply to national democracy, but to the appalling prospect of allowing primitive and half-civilized peoples and peoples with non-European types of culture, to act and think for themselves and share in government."²⁶ Such a vision, in which political and economic equality extends globally, would constitute what Jones calls a "world Renaissance, beside which the little European Renaissance would seem small and petty," and toward which the period of Reconstruction gestured.²⁷ As Jones suggests, this vision must take its cues from the unfulfilled promise of abolition democracy.

By connecting the historical struggle over abolition democracy with ongoing struggles over democratic participation the world over, Jones offers a perspective on "long abolition"²⁸ as an unfinished process. This perspective is underscored by Jones's theory of the commodification of labor, which he characterizes as the unresolved legacy of enslavement. As I will show in the following, his theory points to the suggestion that socialism might be a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for democracy. If it is indeed the reckless, racialized reign of capital that has "ruined democracy," as Du Bois wrote in *Black Reconstruction*²⁹ (and as is once more suggested in this chapter on democracy), Jones traces the origin of this development back to a remarkable source. "The reason of all this," he writes, meaning the subjugation of democratic principles to economic motives,

was the making of the most important body of labor in the world into a mere commodity, and the influence of that commodity idea of labor upon the whole labor of the world. Still today black and colored labor is regarded as a means of wealth rather than as the object for which wealth is created. The shadow of this conception of labor lies over all white labor and will lay there until basic revolution of thought and action lifts it.³⁰

The “commodity idea of labor” referenced here is not the Marxian idea of workers selling their labor-power on the market.³¹ This logic of exploited labor under capitalism applies only to citizen-workers, who own their labor-power as political subjects.³² In contrast, Jones’s theory starts—to borrow Fred Moten’s words—“with the historical reality of commodities who spoke—of laborers who were commodities before, as it were, the abstraction of labor power from their bodies and who continue to pass on this material heritage across the divide that separates slavery and ‘freedom.’”³³ While Marx posits a categorical difference between the “veiled” slavery of wage labor, in which the worker is forced to sell the labor-power that belongs to them as use-value, and slavery “pure and simple,” in which the worker supposedly sells their labor-power “once and for all,”³⁴ and which is superseded in teleological fashion, Jones’s theory complicates such a categorical and temporal distinction.³⁵ Further, he troubles the idea of labor-power being sold at all. The carceral logic of *capture* obliterates the logic of labor-power being *sold*. What underpins Jones’s theory of the commodification of labor, then, is not a relation of exploitation, but rather one of expropriation, in which “black and colored labor” remains barred from the status of citizen-worker.³⁶ In this analytic, the exploited labor of industrial capitalism appears not as the succession of the expropriated labor of the slavery economy. Instead, both of these modes appear as part and parcel of one political-economic regime: racial capitalism.³⁷

As Nancy Fraser writes, “the social division between the exploited and the expropriated does not arise simply from capitalism’s economy. It is produced, rather, at the intersection of the system’s economic logic with its political order.”³⁸ Fraser argues that political subjectivation is key to understanding the logic of expropriation: public powers codify the status hierarchies “that distinguish citizens from subjects,” thereby “marking off groups subject to brute expropriation from those destined for ‘mere’ exploitation.”³⁹ For Fraser, then, “racialization in capitalist society appears at the point where a hierarchy of political statuses meets an amalgamation of disparate mechanisms of accumulation.”⁴⁰ The distinction between subjects of exploitation and subjects of expropriation appears, therefore, as what Du Bois elsewhere called the “color line.”⁴¹ Fraser’s framework draws attention to the political powers that underwrite accumulation—and makes the case that the racialized production of subjects of expropriation is a structural feature deeply embedded in capitalism’s functioning as an “*institutionalized social order*.”⁴² This framework draws attention to the necessarily political-economic character of abolition

democracy: democratized relations of production must be underpinned by non-hierarchical political relations and vice versa. Importantly, however, Jones's call for a "revolution of thought and action" also highlights the necessarily *epistemic* character of abolition democracy that strictly political-economic models either mask or deprioritize.⁴³ To fully lift the shadow of the commodity idea of expropriated human labor, such a revolution must also abolish the episteme that makes possible the disposability of hierarchically ordered human life.

Toward a New Humanism? Abolition Democracy as Epistemic Project

This epistemic dimension is elucidated when we turn to Jones's analysis of the historical relation between liberal democracy and racial capitalism. "The demand for freedom which burst in the French Revolution was primarily the demand of those who were making profits on the buying and selling of labor as a commodity and only secondarily the demand of the poor for higher standards of living," he writes.⁴⁴ This "new set of capitalists, who thus came to power," Jones continues, "and who represented the new equality among men, who insisted on and took increasing freedom of thought and action themselves, in self defense of their new economic prosperity began unconsciously and deliberately to establish their democracy as a stronghold against intrusion from without."⁴⁵ In previously citing parts of this passage, I focused on its political-economic implications of such "intrusion." However, another layer opens up if we examine its implied notion of humanism through the decolonial lens provided by Sylvia Wynter.

The "new equality among men" that this class stood for was the equality among those permitted not merely into the political sphere of democracy, but more broadly into the epistemic realm of a humanism predicated on the model of *homo oeconomicus*—a specific genre of the human, as Wynter phrases it. Wynter's work provides a useful analytical toolbox with which to describe what I take Jones to be getting at here. For Wynter, the political-economic project of Western liberalism is intimately tied to a liberal-economic conception of humanism in which "the human" is understood not "ecumenically" but rather exclusively, in the genre-specific terms of the *homo oeconomicus* ideal.⁴⁶ As Katherine McKittrick writes in her introduction to Wynter's work: "We presently live in a moment where the human is understood as a purely biological mechanism that is subordinated to a teleological economic script that governs our global well-being/ill-being—a script, therefore, whose macro-origin story calcifies the *hero figure* of *homo oeconomicus* who practices, indeed normalizes, accumulation in the name of (economic) freedom."⁴⁷ Because of the history of slavery, empire, and colonialism, this epistemic order imposed

itself as the dominant script for what it means to be human, relegating non-Western, non-male genres to various realms of the non-human, sub-human, or not-quite-human.⁴⁸

Within this episteme, what is good for homo oeconomicus appears to be what is good for humans in general. In a world ruled by capitalism, the economic conception of being human is the imperative for the reproduction of this world. "This is why," Wynter remarks in an interview with David Scott,

however much abundance we can produce, we cannot solve the problem of poverty and hunger. Since the goal of our mode of production is *not* to produce for human beings in general, it's to provide the material conditions of existence for the production and reproduction of our present conception of being human: to secure the well-being, therefore, of those of us, the global middle classes, who have managed to attain to its ethno-class criterion.⁴⁹

When Jones, in his letter on democracy, points to the years between 1776 and 1789—naming, besides the French Revolution, also the Declaration of Independence, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as crucial markers of this period⁵⁰—he alludes to what Wynter calls "the intellectual revolution of liberal or economic humanism."⁵¹ Because at the heart of this intellectual revolution (this is the analytic that I see Jones sharing with Wynter) lies the consolidation of not only a political order built to protect the profits and power dynamics generated through an economic system based on slavery and colonialism, but also the epistemic framework that enables a categorical differentiation between those human beings able to freely participate in these systems, and those to be bought and sold as laboring commodities. If "real democracy," as Jane suggests early on in the novel, "is based upon the widest recognition of human equality," then how can it be achieved within the parameters of homo oeconomicus's exclusive, genre-specific humanism?⁵² For Wynter, this kind of achievement is impossible without an intellectual revolution on the scale of the eighteenth century's—that is, without ushering in the epistemic order of a new humanism.⁵³

At times, Du Bois's novel gestures similarly toward something like a new humanism that is entwined with its democratic ideal. In her very first letter to Jones, Jane espouses an ideal of worldwide democracy that draws on "a new and magnificent humanity, on which a new world can be built."⁵⁴ Finally, in *World Search*'s ultimate chapter, this humanistic idea comes more explicitly to the fore, once again voiced by Jane:

The mechanical dictatorship of the proletariat may bring a socialist state with rising wages and the possibility of democratic control but it also will bring to the front ruthless men of ability, greedy of power and first thing comes Thermidor—comes the substitution; comes the transformation of dictatorship that represents the mass and to a dictatorship that represents itself. And although this second state is not as bad as the first, it calls for more revolution. Now I do not suppose that all this can be avoided. Perhaps we shall go from economic incarnation to reincarnation until the bureaucratic socialistic state dissolves into the democratic state of men who are willing to have other men their equals. But I do not think that even that will occur unless we stress more and work more for the feeling of equality and good will, and desire for other people to become men even as we are. Not even Trotsky's universal communistic revolution is going to provide automatically for this kind of man.⁵⁵

Jane here addresses a fundamental problem for revolutionary theory and praxis: How can political, economic, and social relations be rearranged without ushering in ever-new waves of despotism?⁵⁶ She also raises a central question for abolition democracy: How to construct a new world from within the—material and conceptual—limits of the old? Jane suggests that this is not simply a question of political economy, but rather a question of humanism, or rather, over who “counts” as human in the epistemic order. While a socialist mode of production might constitute one prerequisite for a truly democratic society in Jane’s sense, this material revolution must also be accompanied by an epistemic revolution that does not automatically follow.⁵⁷

Where Jane’s theory differs from Wynter’s is in its aspirational reliance on the mechanisms (and possibilities) of inclusion and uplift. Rather than advocating for a genuinely new humanism, Jane’s argument still makes the case for “excluded others” to be incorporated into the prevailing model (“to become men even as we are”). Thus, we see even in the terminology as voiced through the character of Jane a reproduction of the patriarchal language of Man, overdetermined as the language of humanity-as-such. Jane’s political vision does not fully articulate the horizon of a new humanism. Yet the sentiment voiced by Jane strikes a note that resonates with Wynter’s insights.⁵⁸ This, I will suggest in the following section, is particularly illuminated by honing in on the affective dimension of *World Search*’s vision of abolition democracy.

Inhabiting Insurgent Being: Abolition Democracy as Affective Project

As Jane suggests in the passage quoted above, it is “the *feeling* of equality and good will” that needs to circulate widely in her vision of a democratic society’s affective economy—even with, and in addition to, the abolition of capitalism’s political economy.⁵⁹ Sara Ahmed’s framework of affective economies is helpful here in underscoring that “emotions

do things, and they align individuals with communities.”⁶⁰ Rather than reducing emotions to psychological dispositions, Ahmed suggests that emotions “mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.”⁶¹ Lauren Berlant foregrounds the reciprocity between affective and political economies when they write that “citizenship’s legal architecture manifests itself and is continually reshaped in the space of transactions between intimates and strangers.”⁶² I read Jane’s remark, then, as a recognition of the affective ties of citizenship, in which to *feel* equal with and good will toward one’s fellow citizens would necessarily have to underpin—and, in turn, be supported by—a society’s political-economic infrastructure.

Jane’s expression echoes an earlier observation shared in the chapter titled “Jane on American Negroes,” where she proposes that with “an increasing number of men of real benevolence and good-will . . . we are going to make a new world.”⁶³ These instances speak to the prominent role Jane attributes to a certain kind of affect that her democratic vision demands. Thus we could say that Jane adds the notion of a revolution of feeling to Jones’s call for a revolution of thought and action as critical components of abolition democracy’s reconstructive project. Rather than reading Jane’s commitment to good-will as a form of Kantian ethics, in which this notion is grounded in the false universal of Man,⁶⁴ I want to suggest that there is, in fact, a more radical affective politics at play here. To do so, I will first point out the difference between Jane’s affective politics and a canonical account of liberal affective politics. Then, I will show how Jones insists on anchoring affective politics in everyday, embodied practices. Taken together, I propose that both characters’ positions add up to what Dylan Rodríguez has termed “abolition as praxis of human being.”⁶⁵

In *Political Emotions*, the liberal philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that what she calls “positive feelings” such as love, sympathy, respect, etc.—grounded in a shared sense of morality and good—can serve as a stabilizing force across democratic forms of government.⁶⁶ Nussbaum views it as liberal democracy’s task to cultivate such positive feelings among its citizens, in order not to cede “the terrain of emotion-shaping to antiliberal forces,” which could have a destabilizing effect on society.⁶⁷ But should we see Jane’s focus on feelings of benevolence, equality, and good will simply as efforts to stabilize society? Does her commitment to positive feelings betray a commitment to liberal democracy after all, perhaps even one shared by her author?⁶⁸

I want to suggest instead that the concept of abolition democracy can help us arrive at a more nuanced answer to these questions. For if we draw the first part of the term into our analysis, we shall see a range of more ambiguous “negative feelings” opened up through the project of abolition democracy: Consider the indignation that surfaces in Jane’s passages on local government, deeply mired in the state of Georgia in anti-Black law-

making and practices, or the outrage she expresses over the range of discrimination and disenfranchisement pertaining to her discussions of national government.⁶⁹ Consider also her rather direct call to rebel, complain, and agitate in this passage, which I take to reference the Declaration of Independence, the end of Reconstruction, and the passing of Plessy v. Ferguson: "American democracy born in 1776, was wounded to death in 1876, and given the coup-de-grace in 1894. Why not rebel, complain to heaven and honest men? Why not agitate, arouse, form a new party and sweep county, state and nation into a crusade for new democracy, new civic righteousness, real reform?"⁷⁰

Jane's words serve as a stinging reminder that Du Bois and his fictional characters were practically disfranchised in the Jim Crow South at the time he wrote this book.⁷¹ The affective ties of (white) citizenship in 1930s America thus served to strengthen a legal infrastructure predicated on (Black) exclusion. While Nussbaum might be right in pointing out the necessity of "positive feelings" for democratic projects, the faith she has in Western liberal democracy is not reflected in *World Search*. The emotions expressed in Jane's letters instead suggest a more complex affective economy embedded in her democratic theory. The "positive" side of abolition democracy's affective politics – feelings of good will, equality, and benevolence – is shown as necessarily entwined with its negative side – indignation, agitation, and outrage. This "negative" side resonates with Andrew Dilts and Perry Zurn's description of "abolitionist affect" as a feeling of "active intolerance" toward practices and conditions that are intolerable.⁷² "Active intolerance," they write, "takes aim at all those sites where discipline and oppression effectively silence and subjugate."⁷³ While Dilts and Zurn highlight the prison as an exemplary disciplinary institution, Jane's feelings of active intolerance are directed at the confining, oppressive structures of Jim Crow *Herrenvolk* democracy. If, as Dilts and Zurn suggest, "pursuing an array of abolitionist alternatives is an everyday activity and way of living," such an embodied affective activity is, finally, also mirrored in *World Search*.⁷⁴

"How shall we get him, Jones?" Jane asks, in the last chapter, regarding the kind of "man" required for the new democratic world they envision.⁷⁵ In Jones's answer, we find the theoretical trace of an embodied praxis: "We shall only get him, Jane, by being him; that is, reformers must be willing to be equals."⁷⁶ I propose to read this suggestion (which, arguably, provides something like the moral of the *World Search* story) as an imperative akin to the scholar-activist Dylan Rodríguez's call to inhabit a mode of "insurgent being"—or abolition as praxis of human being.⁷⁷ Drawing on Wynter, Rodríguez suggests that there is an embodied praxis to be found (and, in fact, to be inhabited) in what he calls the "global abolitionist genealogy," i.e. the long tradition of resistance to Western Man's civilizational project, including its political, economic, social, and epistemic orders.⁷⁸ This tradition of Black, indigenous, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, and other modes of resistance that challenge the hegemonic orders of homo oeconomicus provides a counter-model to this

order's liberal futurity that masks as universal. For Rodríguez, "it is possible to *inhabit* abolitionist futurity through already-existing human praxis," thus drawing on the tradition that has long imagined modes of being human not tied to the homo oeconomicus imperative of accumulation in the name of (economic) freedom.⁷⁹ If, as Rodríguez writes, "abolitionism articulates a fundamental critique of existing systems of oppression while attempting to actively imagine as it practices forms of collective power that are liberated from hegemonic paradigms," then such a praxis can be found theorized in Du Bois's *World Search for Democracy*.⁸⁰ Practicing forms of collective power liberated from hegemonic paradigms aptly describes the ongoing political project of abolition democracy. In Du Bois's unpublished 1937 manuscript, he takes up this project as the unfinished legacy of the historical movement he details in *Black Reconstruction*. Through the characters Jane and Jones, he reflects on the material, ideal, and embodied limits of liberal bourgeois citizenship. In doing so, he builds on the concept of abolition democracy to explore its political-economic, epistemic, and affective dimensions—articulating it, finally, as a praxis of human being.

Coda: Jones on Germany

Two years before Du Bois set sail for Germany in 1936, he had resigned from his position at the NAACP—fueled, in part, by his increasing move to the left and his loss of confidence in the project of national inclusion. As Nikhil Pal Singh has noted, Du Bois's program of separate Black economic cooperatives, which he developed in response to the failings of New Deal policy, marked a turn away from "the liberal-democratic faith that had guided and sustained black struggles in the United States since Reconstruction."⁸¹ His resignation also meant that Du Bois had no access to *The Crisis*, the publishing organ so clearly associated with his voice for close to twenty-five years. Over the course of his world travels, Du Bois instead wrote a column for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the leading Black weekly newspapers at the time. In this column under the heading "Forum of Fact and Opinion," readers can find astute observations and clear condemnations of the racial violence carried out by the Nazi regime, particularly on its Jewish population. Du Bois's first report in the *Courier* after leaving Germany, on December 5, 1936, unambiguously states: "There is a campaign of race prejudice carried on, openly, continuously and determinedly against all non-Nordic races, but specifically against the Jews, which surpasses in vindictive cruelty and public insult anything I have ever seen; and I have seen much."⁸²

In the *World Search* manuscript, however, such observations are, for the most part, strikingly absent. At least two thirds of the chapter "Jones on Germany" (which is one of the chapters missing from the original manuscript) do not actually deal with Germany at all, consisting instead of much more general observations on government. This, I propose, is

because the purpose of this chapter is not actually to shed light on Germany. For better or worse, I argue, *World Search* de-exceptionalizes the fascism of Nazi Germany in order to make a world-historical argument against various forms of white supremacist, capitalist government. As Alberto Toscano has noted, Du Bois was among those Black radical thinkers in the 1930s who "sought to expand the historical and political imagination of an antifascist left by detailing how what from a European or white vantage point could be perceived as a radically new form of ideology and violence was in effect continuous with the history of colonial dispossession and racial slavery."⁸³

The chapter begins with a set of telling questions which set out how Jones views the problem of government very broadly, and which once again pivot on his insight that "humanity" is a constructed, rather than a self-evidently universal category. Jones writes, "The crucial question of government is: How far is the State being conducted for the best interests of Mankind?"⁸⁴, ca. 1937, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), box 225, 1.] He follows this up with a similarly crucial question that illustrates the central dilemma that *World Search* highlights: "Are the interests of the White world and the World at Large antagonistic?"⁸⁵ Du Bois, at the very least, contends in this novel with the possibility that this is, in fact, the case. Aligned, historically, with capital—as argued in other parts of *World Search*—white supremacy is one of the ideological forces through which the West's oligarchies and *Herrenvolk* democracies maintain their power. Jones's line of questioning thus continues: If government is conducted by a powerful group, "is it clear, that the interests of mankind, and not the interests of their group is the object and the continuing object of the endeavors? Who decides between the special interests of the group and the interests of humanity?"⁸⁶

In these rhetorical questions, I read a thinly veiled critique of Western liberal democracy along the lines I outlined following Sylvia Wynter's critique of liberal humanism. Jones is suggesting that governments ruled by white supremacy and capital only purport to be acting in the best interest of mankind. Wynter helps us understand that this is made possible through the homo oeconomicus conception of mankind instituting itself as the definition of Man. This insight leads Jones on a similar quest for a new humanism: "Is there, or can there be conceived, a humanity whose collective interests, regardless of class, race, or nation, are or should be paramount in the world?"⁸⁷ If this follows neatly from the discussion I outlined previously, it is because it constitutes one of the central propositions of Du Bois's novel: The political question of *democracy-for-whom* is inseparably intertwined with the epistemic question of *humanity-for-whom*.

World Search makes clear that what Jones finds in Germany is not democracy, but rather a military dictatorship that governs by ruthless authority and tireless, hate-filled propaganda. Yet, this fictional visitor suggests that the dictatorial form of government shares a similar

concern to the forms of government he finds elsewhere in Europe and the United States: "The desperate and continued effort of individual and group interests to use the State for their own ends, wishes and purposes, with the assumption that this is natural, historical, and logical, and calls for no defense save that it works and is patently beneficial to a few."⁸⁸ If this is something like the lowest denominator that Nazi Germany and Jim Crow America hold in common, Du Bois emphasizes elsewhere that he perceives also crucial differences. In a March 1937 letter to the American Jewish Committee, in which he clarifies comments that he made to the *New York Staatszeitung und Herold*, Du Bois writes:

while I was in Germany the Nazi[s] had so changed the laws that practically anything they did to Jews was legal, and what you had was legal oppression rather than the illegal cast[e] and lynching of Negroes in the United States. On the other hand the difference between these two methods is not essential, but it does make direct comparison between the plight of the Negroes in America and the Jews in Germany difficult and in many respects misleading.⁸⁹

While Du Bois is correct to assert the difficulty of direct comparison, he misrecognizes that both of these modes of oppression do, in historical fact, overlap. It is precisely in the twinning of legal and extra-legal violence that fascism rears its ugly head. This is what Du Bois so jarringly memorializes in *Black Reconstruction*'s second-to-last chapter, "Back Toward Slavery." As evidenced by the vigilante violence unleashed by the Ku-Klux-Klan and other self-organized white terrorist organizations in the wake of Reconstruction—as well as by the anti-Semitic pogroms carried out in Nazi Germany in the years following Du Bois's visit—fascism depends on the deputization of civilians to carry out the interests of the state.⁹⁰ In the US context, as Geo Maher has argued, the lines between legal and extra-legal violence have never been clearly drawn, which has deeply entrenched an inflated notion of who or what constitutes police in the structure of American society.⁹¹ For abolitionist politics today, then, it is important to recognize this fascist potential as not simply bound to the organized violence of the state. A heuristic of fascisms in the plural, as suggested by Alyosha Goldstein and Simón Ventura Trujillo, can perhaps help to balance and productively retain this tension—between, for instance, Nazi Germany's decidedly anti-liberal fascism and the fascist potentials at the heart of liberal democracy.⁹² Such a heuristic could also help expand on the connection between viewing "fascism and its corollaries as responses to anticolonial revolution, abolitionist worldmaking, and the escalating crises of capitalism accumulation,"⁹³ and grasping "abolitionist living [as] anti-fascist living."⁹⁴ That is to say, while Du Bois has trouble interpreting fascism from the perspective of "long abolition," those difficulties can productively inform contemporary discussions about the necessary link between abolition and anti-fascism—but also about the *distinct* challenges that *different* fascisms might pose for the project of abolition democracy.

Notes

1. W. E. B. Du Bois to Harcourt, Brace and Company, February 11, 1937, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. ↵
2. I thank Lisa McLeod for sharing her notes from the physical archive with me and for helping me locate the missing chapter on Germany. Besides Nahum Dimitri Chandler, McLeod is one of only two scholars to have published any notable research on the manuscript. See Nahum Dimitri Chandler, "A Persistent Parallax: On the Writings of W. E. Burghardt Du Bois on Japan and China, 1936–1937," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 291–316; and Lisa McLeod, "Du Bois's 'A World Search for Democracy': The Democratic Roots of Socialism," *Socialism and Democracy* 32, no. 3 (November 2018): 105–124. Nick Bromell, in his helpful outline of what is mostly the early Du Bois's democratic theory, opens his article with a scene from *World Search* but does not discuss it further. Nick Bromell, "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Enlargement of Democratic Theory," *Raritan* 30, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 140–161. Other influential studies on Du Bois and democracy often make no mention of the manuscript at all, e.g. Lawrie Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction: Thinking Politically with W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). ↵
3. McLeod, "Democratic Roots," 106. ↵
4. W. E. B. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, ca. 1937, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, 1. ↵
5. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 1. ↵
6. Since Nahum Chandler, in "A Persistent Parallax" analyzes the chapters on Japan and China at length, I will not discuss these here. The chapter on Russia is missing from the original manuscript. ↵
7. For more on how Du Bois's semi-autobiographical personae often permeate his fiction, see Lily Wiatrowski Phillips, "The Black Flame Revisited: Recursion and Return in the Reading of W. E. B. Du Bois's Trilogy," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 15, no. 2 (2015): 157–169, [<https://doi.org/10.14321/crnewcentrevi.15.2.0157>](https://doi.org/10.14321/crnewcentrevi.15.2.0157). For more on Du Bois's journey, see David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919–1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 388–421. ↵
8. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Oberlaender Trust application, May 1931," W. E. B. Du Bois Papers. ↵
9. See also Werner Sollors, "W. E. B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany, 1936." *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 44, no. 2 (1999): 207–222. As a way of positioning myself in this research, I want to note that this specter of Nazi propaganda loomed large over my childhood, as I grew up a ten-minute walk away from Berlin's Olympiastadion. ↵
10. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, ii. ↵
11. Charisse Burden-Stelly has evocatively used this term to describe the years leading up to *Black Reconstruction*, from 1933 until its publication in 1935, though I would suggest extending this periodization to include later publications that reflect some of the same concerns. See also Charisse Burden Stelly (with Gerald Horne), "From Black Reconstruction to Black Liberation: The Radicalization of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, 1931–1961," Personal blog, accessed August 24, 2022, [<https://www.charisseburdenstelly.com/blog/4-the-vagaries-of-the-edited-volume>](https://www.charisseburdenstelly.com/blog/4-the-vagaries-of-the-edited-volume) ↵
12. For a discussion of this distinction between concept and political movement, see Robert Gooding-Williams in "Abolition 2/13: Abolition Democracy," October 15, 2020, [<http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/abolition1313/2-13-abolition-democracy>](http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/abolition1313/2-13-abolition-democracy). ↵
13. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 679. ↵

14. As Ralph and Singhal note, "Du Bois is often cited as providing the framework for 'racial capitalism,' though he never used the phrase." Michael Ralph and Maya Singhal, "Racial Capitalism," *Theory and Society* 48 (2019): 864. ↵
15. Quoted in Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 95. For more, see also Gary Wilder, "Reading Du Bois's Revelation: Radical Humanism and Black Atlantic Criticism," in *The Postcolonial Contemporary*, ed. Jini Kim Watson and Gary Wilder (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 95–125; and Yuichiro Onishi and Toru Shinoda, "The Paradigm of Refusal: W. E. B. Du Bois's Transpacific Political Imagination in the 1930s" in *Citizen of the World: The Late Career and Legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Phillip Luke Sinitiere (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 13–35. ↵
16. Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005). See also, for example, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, ed. Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano (London and New York: Verso, 2022); Andrew Dilts, "Crisis, Critique, and Abolition," in *A Time for Critique*, ed. Bernard E. Harcourt and Didier Fassin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019, 230–251); Allegra McLeod, "Envisioning Abolition Democracy," *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 6 (April 2019): 1613–1649; Dylan Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword," *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 6 (April 2019): 1575–1612; Daniel Loick and Vanessa E. Thompson, *Abolitionismus: Ein Reader* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2022); Joel Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Quinn Lester, "Whose Democracy in Which State?: Abolition Democracy from Angela Davis to W. E. B. Du Bois," in *Social Science Quarterly* 102, no. 7 (December 2021): 3081–3086. ↵
17. I thank a reviewer for suggesting the concept of citizenship as a way of bringing out the connection between these three elements more clearly. ↵
18. See also McLeod, "Democratic Roots," and Michael J. Saman, "Du Bois and Marx, Du Bois and Marxism," *Du Bois Review* 17, no. 1 (2020): 33–54, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1742058x20000089> <<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1742058x20000089>>. ↵
19. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 6. ↵
20. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 9. ↵
21. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 21. ↵
22. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 23. ↵
23. For a reading of how Du Bois inverts the tragic legend of Reconstruction, "showing how the real harm done to American democracy was not the rule of 'black Republicanism' but the reimposition of white supremacy," see Vijay Phulwani, "A Splendid Failure? Black Reconstruction and Du Bois's Tragic Vision of Politics," in *A Political Companion to W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Nick Bromell (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 272. ↵
24. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 25. ↵
25. See also Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 48. ↵
26. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 24. ↵
27. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 25. ↵
28. Dylan Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword," *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 6 (April 2019): 1575–1612. ↵
29. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 30. ↵
30. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 26–27. ↵
31. See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 274: "The capitalist epoch is therefore characterized by the fact that

labour-power, in the eyes of the worker himself, takes on the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently takes on the form of wage-labour." ↵

32. See also Nancy Fraser, "Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism: A Reply to Michael Dawson," *Critical Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 163–178, <https://doi.org/10.1086/685814> <https://doi.org/10.1086/685814>. ↵

33. Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 6. ↵

34. Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*, 271. ↵

35. Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*, 925: "the veiled slavery of the wage workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world." See also Walter Johnson's reading of this passage. Walter Johnson, "The Pedestal and the Veil: Rethinking the Capitalism/Slavery Question." *Journal of the Early Republic* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 299–308, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812207231.149> <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812207231.149>. ↵

36. See also Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 123. ↵

37. Cedric Robinson famously made this point in his argument about *Black Reconstruction*. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press, 2000. 1983). ↵

38. Fraser, "Expropriation and Exploitation," 170. ↵

39. Fraser, "Expropriation and Exploitation," 170. ↵

40. Fraser, "Expropriation and Exploitation," 172. ↵

41. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. G. McClurg, 1903; New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968). ↵

42. Fraser, "Expropriation and Exploitation," 173, emphasis in text. ↵

43. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 27; emphasis added. In "The Paradigm of Refusal," Onishi and Shinoda show how Du Bois's idea that an epistemic revolution must complement a political-economic one also resonates with Toyohiko Kagawa's "Brotherhood Economics," which Du Bois was interested in at the time. ↵

44. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 22. ↵

45. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 23. ↵

46. See, for example, Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition," in *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, ed. Jason R. Ambroise and Sabine Broeck (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 196; or Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human As Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 21. ↵

47. McKittrick and Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 10; emphasis in text. ↵

48. See also David Scott and Sylvia Wynter, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe* 8, September 2000, 182. ↵

49. Scott and Wynter, "Re-Enchantment," 160. "Ethno-class" here refers to the Western-bourgeois notion of humanism, see also "Re-Enchantment," 196. ↵

50. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 22. ↵

51. Scott and Wynter, "Re-Enchantment," 202. ↵

52. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 17. ↵

53. Wynter also gestures to the work of Frantz Fanon with this notion, see, for instance, "Re-Enchantment," 95. ↵

54. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 7. ↵

55. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 125. ↵

56. This question becomes particularly relevant with regards to Stalin's Russia at the time of Du Bois's writing, and unfortunately, the chapter "Jones on Russia" is also missing from the extant manuscript. ↵

57. See also Wynter's perspective on this in "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 41. ↵

58. In other writings from around the time when he wrote *World Search*, Du Bois did gesture to such expansive horizons beyond inclusion—for instance, when he wrote in his column for the *Pittsburgh Courier* in April 1937, "We are fighting for universal equality . . . Not to become white men; not to become yellow men; but to become ourselves and to hold ourselves the equal of any." W. E. B. Du Bois, *Newspaper Columns*, ed. Herbert Aptheker, vol. 1: 1883–1944 (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1986), 189. ↵

59. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 125; emphasis added. ↵

60. Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies." *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (79), (Summer 2004), 119, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117 <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117>; emphasis in text. ↵

61. Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 119. ↵

62. Lauren Berlant, "Citizenship," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies, Third Edition*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 44. ↵

63. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 87. ↵

64. See also Charles Mills, "Kant's Untermenschen," in *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, ed. Andrew Valls (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 169–193. ↵

65. Dylan Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword," *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 6 (April 2019): 1575–1612. ↵

66. Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 2. For a critique of Nussbaum's clear-cut classification of good and bad emotions, see Jonas Bens et al., *The Politics of Affective Societies* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019), 15. ↵

67. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 2. ↵

68. For a philosophical recuperation of a Du Boisian, "Black radical liberalism," in contrast to orthodox, racialized liberalism, see Charles Mills, "W. E. B. Du Bois: Black Radical Liberal," in *A Political Companion to W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Nick Bromell (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2018), 19–56. ↵

69. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 52, 69. ↵

70. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 57. Jane's reference is to 1894 and not to 1896, the year in which *Plessy v. Ferguson* was passed. Based on the fact that she appears to imply a connection between democracy's "wounding" and its "coup-de-grace," though, I take this connection to gesture to two significant dates of the Jim Crow era. ↵

71. McLeod, "Democratic Roots," 116. ↵

72. Andrew Dilts and Perry Zurn, "Affect, Active Intolerance, and Abolition," in *Theory & Event* 24, no. 2 (April 2021), 609. ↵

73. Dilts and Zurn, "Affect, Active Intolerance, and Abolition," 607. ↵

74. Dilts and Zurn, "Affect, Active Intolerance, and Abolition," 608. ↵

75. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 125. ↵

76. Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 125. While the term "reformer" may carry a certain kind of liberal connotation for us today, Jones uses it to describe a rather wide range of 1930s character types: "I have met . . . three classes of reformer: the revolutionist who thinks {sic} that everything is so bad that only immediate murder and destruction can begin new life. Then there is the critic to whom nothing is good but who depends with rare faith upon time to right things and does nothing now. And finally, there is the man of action who sees good and bad and wants to do something about it." Du Bois, *A World Search for Democracy*, 122. ↵

77. Dylan Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword," *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 6 (April 2019): 1575–1612. ↵

78. Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis," 1609. ↵

79. Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis," 1608; emphasis in text. ↵

80. Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis," 1612; emphasis in text. ↵

81. Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 59. ↵

82. Quoted in Sollors, "Du Bois in Nazi Germany," 218. Sollors notes that Du Bois's clear condemnation of Nazi Germany in the *Courier* begins only after he had left the country. Prior to that, his column included largely uncritical observations on opera, science, and (to a lesser extent) the Olympics. ↵

83. Alberto Toscano, "The Returns of Racial Fascism," in *For Antifascist Futures: Against the Violence of Imperial Crisis*, ed. Alyosha Goldstein and Simón Ventura Trujillo (Brooklyn and Philadelphia: Common Notions, 2022), 246. ↵

84. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Jones on Germany [fragment] ↵

85. Du Bois, "Jones on Germany," 1. ↵

86. Du Bois, "Jones on Germany," 2. ↵

87. Du Bois, "Jones on Germany," 3. ↵

88. Du Bois, "Jones on Germany," 3. ↵

89. W. E. B. Du Bois to American Jewish Committee, March 10, 1937, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. ↵

90. See also Johanna Fernández, "On the Historical Roots of US Fascism," in Goldstein and Trujillo, *For Antifascist Futures: Against the Violence of Imperial Crisis*, 43–52. For a development of the argument that what Du Bois identifies in the Reconstruction era is a form of "racial fascism," see Amiri Baraka, "Black Reconstruction: Du Bois & the U.S. Struggle for Democracy & Socialism," in *Conjunctions*, no. 29 (1997): 62–80. ↵

91. Geo Maher, *A World Without Police: How Strong Communities Make Cops Obsolete* (London and New York: Verso, 2021), 19–23. I thank a reviewer for raising Maher's work as a reference for this point. ↵

92. Alyosha Goldstein and Simón Ventura Trujillo, "Fascism Now? Inquiries for an Expanded Frame," in Goldstein and Trujillo, *For Antifascist Futures: Against the Violence of Imperial Crisis*, 1–20. ↵

93. Goldstein and Trujillo, "Fascism Now?," 19–20. ↵

94. Che Gossett, "Abolitionist Alternatives: Black Radicalism and the Refusal of Reform," *Cabinet Magazine*, December 15, 2020,
https://cabinetmagazine.org/kiosk/gossett_che_15_december_2020.php <
https://cabinetmagazine.org/kiosk/gossett_che_15_december_2020.php>. ↵

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